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TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: MASS, SA, EG, IR, US

SUBJECT: TRAINING OF EGYPTIAN PILOTS

REF: TEHRAN 12015

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SISCO

1. FYI. EMBASSY JIDDA HAS REPORTED THAT SIX EGYPTIAN PILOTS AND NINE MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL ARE RECEIVING TRAINING IN THE SAUDI F-5 PROGRAM AT DHAHRAN. THIS RAISES SERIOUS POLICY QUESTIONS, AS WELL AS LEGAL PROBLEM OF A LESSER ORDER. UNDER FMS ACT, SAUDIS ARE NOT EXPRESSLY PRECLUDED

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FROM PROVIDING SUCH TRAINING; IT IS, HOWEVER, A VIOLATION

OF SAUDI UNDERTAKING IN ITS FMS CONTRACT AGREEMENT FOR THE SAUDIS TO DISCLOSE INFORMATION ABOUT THE F-5 TO EGYPTIAN PILOTS. SINCE THERE ARE SO FEW EGYPTIANS INVOLVED, AND THE INFORMATION COMMUNICATED IS NOT VERY SENSITIVE, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS VIOLATION CONSTITUTES A "SUBSTANTIAL VIOLATION" UNDER SECTION 3(C) OF THE ACT, OF THE TYPE WHICH WOULD MAKE SAUDI ARABIA IMMEDIATELY INELIGIBLE FOR FURTHER FMS SALES. THERE COULD, HOWEVER, BE A DISPUTE ABOUT THIS INTERPRETATION, ESPECIALLY IN CONGRESS. END FYI.

2. YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN TO GOI AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL THAT SAG HAD BEGUN TRAINING OF A SMALL NUMBER OF EGYPTIANS ON F-5S. SINCE THIS REQUIRES A TRANSFER OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE F-5, IT IS IN VIOLATION OF THE TERMS OF THE FMS SALES AGREEMENT. WE HAVE BROUGHT THIS TO ATTENTION OF THE SAUDI AND EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENTS AND IN VIEW OF THE CONSIDERATIONS DISCUSSED IN PARA 3 BELOW, WE ARE REQUESTING THOSE GOVERNMENTS TO TERMINATE THIS TRAINING. WE WILL, HOWEVER, KEEP EGYPTIAN INTEREST IN TRAINING ON AMERICAN AIRCRAFT UNDER REVIEW. SINCE SAME CONSIDERATIONS APPLY TO IRANIAN PROPOSAL, WE CANNOT CONCUR IN GOI TRAINING OF EGYPTIANS AT THIS TIME, BUT SHOULD CONDITIONS CHANGE SUFFICIENTLY TO PERMIT TRAINING, WE WOULD EXPECT TO EXTEND PERMISSION TO IRAN AS WELL AS TO SAUDIS.

3. A. THE US CONGRESS MUST STILL APPROVE THE PROVISION OF SUBSTANTIAL FUNDS FOR ECONOMIC AID TO EGYPT. QUESTION OF EVENTUAL POSSIBLE MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH EGYPT HAS BEEN RAISED IN THAT CONTEXT. NEWS THAT EGYPTIANS WERE FLYING US-ORIGIN PLANES WOULD APPEAR TO PRE-EMPT FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF THIS SUBJECT. PROGRAM FOR EGYPTIAN PILOTS WOULD BE SEEN AS IN VIOLATION OF PROCEDURES GOVERNING AGREED USE OF US-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT. IN ORDER TO ASSURE ORDERLY CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS AND NOT TO JEOPARDIZE SUPPORT FOR ESSENTIAL ECONOMIC AID TO EGYPT, WE BELIEVE IT MOST IMPORTANT TO AVOID RISKS THAT PUBLICITY ABOUT THIS TRAINING WOULD PRESENT.

B. SADAT'S VISIT TO THE US FOCUSED ATTENTION ON SOME OF THE MOST SENSITIVE ISSUES OF OUR PEACEMAKING EFFORTS IN
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THE MIDDLE EAST AND OF OUR DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIP WITH EGYPT--INCLUDING QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE FUTURE MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP. WE BELIEVE WE MUST AVOID ANY ACTION THAT WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE USG HAS A COMMITMENT TO SUPPLY EGYPT WITH SOPHISTICATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT--AS WOULD BE IMPLIED BY PROGRAMS TO FAMILIARIZE EGYPTIAN PILOTS WITH US AIRCRAFT WITH OUR EXPRESS OR TACIT CONCURRENCE--EVEN BEFORE ANY PARTICULAR PROPOSAL HAS BEEN FORMU-

LATED AND DISCUSSED WITH THE CONGRESS.

C. FINALLY, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT CONGRESSIONAL CIRCLES AND IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE MEDIA WHO ARE CRITICAL OF OUR ARMS SALES POLICY IN THE GULF MIGHT SEIZE UPON THIS ISSUE AS ANOTHER STRONG ARGUMENT FAVORING NEW RESTRICTIONS ON ARMS SALES TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

D. IN VIEW OF THESE COMPELLING FACTORS, WE HAVE REQUESTED THAT GOE AND SAG TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO TERMINATE THESE

TRAINING PROGRAMS. ALTHOUGH WE RECOGNIZE VALUE OF TRAINING TO EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES, WE THINK THAT CURRENT VALUE IS NOT SIGNIFICANT COMPARED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF OTHER COMMON OBJECTIVES WHICH MIGHT BE JEOPARDIZED IF THE TRAINING WERE CONTINUED AND CAME TO LIGHT.

E. WE BELIEVE THAT THESE CONSIDERATIONS APPLY EQUALLY TO PROPOSALS TO TRAIN EGYPTIANS ON US-ORIGIN AIRCRAFT OWNED BY IIAF. WE HAVE INFORMED GOE AND SAG THAT IRAN HAS SHOWN INTEREST IN TRAINING EGYPTIANS, BUT THAT WE WILL NOT CONCUR IN GOI REQUEST FOR THE SAME REASONS WE ARE REQUESTING TERMINATION OF THE PROGRAM IN SAUDI ARABIA.

4. SINCE ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON WILL BE RAISING SUBJECT OF TRAINING OF EGYPTIAN PILOTS IN JIDDA AND CAIRO ON DECEMBER 20 AND 21 RESPECTIVELY, YOU SHOULD ARRANGE TO RAISE SUBJECT WITH IRANIANS ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21.
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